

# Promoting Youth Civic Engagement Annual Report 2013

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*Cover photo: Peer Network Members and youth volunteers help install a rainwater harvesting system at MoYS Bilquis Club in Sana'a. The installation was supported by a PYCE Community Grant and implemented in cooperation with several local organizations, such as EVO and RAINS. Credit: PYCE Staff.*

**LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

America-Mideast Educational and Training Services  
Community Engagement Workshop  
Community Grant  
Ministry of Education  
Ministry of Endowments and Guidance  
Ministry of Youth and Sports  
National Organization for the Development of Society  
Participatory Analysis for Community Action  
Peace Players International  
Peer Network  
Promoting Youth Civic Engagement  
Sport and Activity Coordinator Program  
Steering Committee  
Training of Trainers  
United States Agency for International Development

AMIDEAST  
CE Workshop  
CG  
MoE  
MoEG  
MoYS  
NODS  
PACA  
PPI  
PN  
PYCE  
SAC  
SC  
TOT  
USAID

## Promoting Youth Civic Engagement (PYCE) Program Summary

The PYCE project is designed to support USAID's objective of increasing Yemen's stability through targeted interventions in vulnerable areas by (1) improving community-based institutions and mechanisms to ensure active participation in governance and locally driven solutions strengthened; and (2) improving access to and the delivery of quality services.

To support this USAID objective, the PYCE project objectives have sought: to strengthen the role of moderate religious actors in positively influencing Yemeni youth, and to establish and support youth sports and recreational programs. In response to changes in Yemen's political and socio-economic context, which has been influenced recently by the Arab Spring that led to the Yemeni Revolution, a new Transitional Government, and an ongoing process of national reconciliation and priority-setting known as the National Dialogue, the language of these objectives has been enhanced. These objectives have been expanded to foster a more diverse set of program components that can accomplish the overarching objectives of USAID in a new Yemen. The proposed, enhanced objectives are: 1) strengthen and increase interaction between youth and influential community actors, including moderate religious actors; and 2) empower youth to positively affect their local communities through sports, recreational programs, and other community-based engagement activities.

AMIDEAST and its proposed partners Peace Players International (PPI) and the National Organization for the Development of Society (NODS), in cooperation with the Ministries of Youth and Sports (MoYS), Endowments and Guidance (MoEG) and Education (MoE), will adopt a technical approach to accomplish these objectives that will support strengthening youth participation in their communities via civic engagement. In conjunction with community stakeholders and mentors known as Steering Committee (SC) Members the PYCE Program has trained more than 250 male and female youth between the ages of 18-32 in the principles and methods of civic engagement. PYCE leadership and development training has included the Community Engagement (CE) Workshop, Training of Trainers (TOT) Program and Sport and Activity Coordinator (SAC) Program, along with ongoing monitoring and experiential learning opportunities. These activities advance skills in peer-facilitation, community needs assessment, program development, formation of community teams and leagues, evaluation of participant learning, and gathering long-term support for community programs. These youth, known as Peer Network (PN) members, are expected to identify and train other youth, thereby increasing the impact of the PYCE Program and promoting the sustainability of youth-led and youth-centered activities after the program ends.

### Peer Network Activities

Peer Network events are implemented as Community Grants and encompass awareness, sports and recreational and community service activities. Awareness sessions are developed to provide life and vocational skills training, as well as personal and character development. Peer Network sport activities are based on the sport-for-development model, which utilizes sport, physical activity and play to achieve development goals in sectors such as education and health. Community service activities will be performed to augment PYCE solar system renovations and upgrades, such as repairs to windows and doors, cleaning and painting, planting gardens and

removing debris. The solar systems, in turn, power lights and fans, which prevent otherwise frequent disruptions of activities when power outages occur, thereby enabling the Peer Network to extend activities into the evenings, where youth can become positively engaged. Solar system renovations reduce operational costs for youth centers, promote natural resource conservation and serve as an educational tool that supports science and technology curricula. These events directly improve the capacity of youth centers and address critical needs. They are implemented at PYCE-supported youth centers and their affiliated spaces and can be held in conjunction with local charities to maximize awareness and outreach efforts. Youth centers are supported by Peer Network Activity Council (PNAC) members, who play a key role in maintaining solar systems, organizing and promoting youth activities, and liaising with ministry officials, moderate religious actors and business leaders to facilitate continuous community buy-in and support. As their activities and involvement increases, Peer Network Members can internalize their role as youth leaders and become more confident in their ability to promote positive behaviors, increase access to and quality of services and contribute to the development of locally driven solutions. They can also re-imagine their neighborhoods as thriving and unified spaces, where they can contribute to a more stable and democratic society.



Figure 2&3: There was an abandoned field operating as a trash heap adjacent to MoYS Rawda Club in Aden. Yet, after PYCE renovations, the field was transformed into a thriving basketball and multi-purpose play court. Photo credits: PYCE Staff.

## PYCE Achievements

### *Sustainability, Natural Resource Conservation and Youth Leadership and Development*

PYCE has adopted a strategic approach to the promotion of civic engagement, in which youth clubs and K-12 schools serve as youth centers. Youth centers are the ‘anchors’ which provide a public and youth-friendly milieu, where PN Members can be trained and later, conduct activities for their at-risk peers. As anchors, PYCE understood that these youth-serving institutions, were limited because of water shortages, missing equipment, structural deficiencies and power





outages. Thus, much of PYCE's efforts were focused upon renovations, which conserved natural resources such as solar system installations and rainwater harvesting.

PYCE selected youth centers, with the highest levels of community buy-in and a commitment to be inclusive, particularly as it relates to programs for women and girls. Concurrent with these renovations, PYCE sought to enhance the knowledge and skills of aspiring youth leaders and prepare

them to serve their communities as role models.

The aforementioned CE Workshop, TOT and SAC programs were implemented in the first half of 2013 for youth leaders and PN Members in Aden, Marib, Sana'a and Lahej. An advanced TOT was conducted for high-achieving PN Members by mid-year and later, an additional CE Workshop was held for aspiring PN Members in expansion districts in Aden. Moreover, in cooperation with NODS and SC Members, the PYCE Team monitored all PN activities and provided constant support to encourage the development of their skills and confidence in their abilities. These training opportunities were considered part of a formative skills-building, process which increased the capacity of the PN to gather and organize large groups of youth for the purposes of teams, leagues and sustainable activities. These trainings were not aimed to promote individually-led activities, rather they were conducted to develop life skills with a focus on teamwork and collaboration. This collaboration included PN Members, youth centers, local



associations and other stakeholders that through ongoing, co-constructed activities, offered positive alternatives which resonated with at-risk youth across the country. PN Members will continue to offer activities for youth under the guidance of SC Members, at least twice per month. They are currently expanding the methods utilized to promote their activities and increase youth awareness of civic engagement in their neighborhoods.

Figures 4&5: PN Members and youth volunteers learn how to clean and maintain solar panels at PYCE-supported youth centers.



### *Expanding public spaces for women and girls*

PYCE has successfully promoted the designation of female-only spaces and increased activities for women and girls at youth centers. PYCE is committed to the development of female youth leaders and has sought to achieve a gender balance in all of its activities and interventions.

More than 40% of all PNAC and PN Members are female. Indeed, out of more than 4,000 youth trained by PN Members, approximately 50% were female. With support from PYCE Community Grants, more than 340 women and female youth participated in workshops and community-service activities centered upon home-based income generation, health, career readiness and college preparation. These events were implemented in cooperation with local organizations such as the Women Development Association in Aden and Sakaf Photography – a women-owned small business in Lahej. Further, participants enhanced skills, which could foster potential freelance opportunities and benefited from the tutelage of a woman business owner and role model.

Many female participants were able to enjoy sports and recreational opportunities outside of their homes for the first time. Recreational activities included volleyball, soccer, relay games, jump rope, tug-of-war and basketball. Moreover, awareness sessions were aimed at encouraging a greater role for females in the public sphere. Thus, in addition to career related activities, activities incorporated life skills such as self-confidence, making positive choices and planning life goals. Most activities were paired with volunteerism, which allowed youth to participate in the PYCE Program as beneficiaries and as servant leaders.

Figure 6, 7, 8 & 9: Youth females enjoy sports, recreational and community-service activities at PYCE-supported youth centers.



Figures 10&11: PN, SC and community members of all ages enjoy the courts, supported by new solar-powered lights at MoYS Intalak Club in Lahej. Photo Credits: PYCE Staff.

### *Gathering support from community members of all ages*

For most organizations, ongoing crises in terms of the political, social and economic status of Yemenis, influenced the pace with which activities could be implemented. Protests, roadblocks and acts of civil disobedience at times caused activities to be rescheduled. Further, another organization did not adhere to cultural expectations in Lahej and conducted an event which was poorly received by some members of the community. Activities in Lahej were briefly delayed, while the appropriate actions could be taken. In addition, there were incidences of vandalism by a small segment of the population in Sana'a, at a PYCE-supported youth center. There was also armed conflict between public security forces and a group of men in Aden. Reverberations from the conflict, caused damage to windows in many nearby locations, including the PYCE office in Khormaksar. While there was minimal damage in both cases, additional resources had to be directed to mitigate these events and operations were briefly delayed. Despite these challenges, in addition to the afore-mentioned accomplishments noteworthy gains have been made.

Interaction between youth and community actors, including moderate religious actors has been strengthened, as PN and SC Members worked collaboratively to implement Community Grants and maintain solar systems at youth centers. The result of this collaboration and effective outreach, has been the increased capacity of youth centers. As new activities and resources became known, community members of all ages embraced the PN and supported their efforts. Youth centers have reported dramatic increases in membership and adults have joined sports





and recreational events both as participants and spectators. The PN and SC have also worked closely with more than 12 local and international organizations and businesses such as the Red Crescent, Islamic Relief, SOUL, Tadhammon, NODS and Life Makers. These collaborations led to the implementation of nearly 20 workshops on safety, first aid and emergency preparedness, which targeted youth, teachers and parent councils.

As the PN gain experience, they have become more innovative, combining lesser known activities

such as bicycling and kickboxing, with popular sports such as soccer and basketball. They have also combined service activities such as clean-ups and repairs, with soil cultivation and greening. Their approach has been inclusive, constructing bus shades for older adults and persons with special needs and conducting educational and chess competitions, which provided recreational opportunities for youth, including those with physical limitations, while promoting year-round education. With a focus on equality, PN Members participated in democratic processes through PNAC elections and conducted outreach to minority groups such as the *muhamasheen*, a group of people who are considered foreigners in Yemen and have no path to citizenship or the benefits it entails. These efforts have garnered widespread coverage through *14 October Newspaper*, Aden TV, *Aden Al Ghad* and other media outlets.



Figures 12 & 13: PN Members increase the capacity of youth centers by conducting sports activities and making repairs.

With strong community support, PYCE has conducted activities in 4 governorates and received a no cost extension through May 2014. Activities have been expanded to Abyan and the Adeni district of Mansourah. Despite the fluid security environment and ongoing social and economic



challenges across the country, PYCE has met or exceeded all except 1 program target. PYCE expects the remaining target to be exceeded by May 2014. The following tables illustrate the achievements of PYCE program objectives.

**Intermediate Result 1:** Strengthen and increase interaction between youth and influential community actors, including moderate religious actors

Activities	Target	Project Total by September 30, 2013
# of community actors engaged in governorate level meetings	250	1,369
# of Steering Committee Meetings	25	56
# of meetings for PYCE participants at youth centers	27	46
# of Community Grants awarded to Peer Network (PN) Members	18	37

**Intermediate Result 2:** Empower youth to positively affect their local communities through sports, recreational programs and other community-based engagement activities

Activities	Target	Project Total by September 30, 2013
# of youth centers renovated	11	11
# of PACA informed teamwork activities completed	50	99
# of youth trained as coaches, activity coordinators and referees	50	107
# of activated and involved teams that work	16	64
# of Peer Network Members trained on TOT (peer facilitators)	48	92
# of participants trained by PN	1,350	4,383
# of channels of communication by PN	90	32

### ***Program Interventions in 2014***

In 2014, PYCE will continue to renovate youth centers and support PN activities through Community Grants in Aden, Abyan and Lahej. In particular, PYCE will expand efforts in the area of dropout prevention in K-12 schools, encourage safety in centers, and support natural resource conservation through solar power or rainwater harvesting. Stakeholders meetings will be held, as a part of a larger series of events to promote community buy-in and increase public-private partnerships. The CE Workshop, TOT and SAC Programs will be conducted for PN Members in expansion sites in February 2014. In keeping with the Program description, closeout activities will begin in the governorates of Sana'a and Marib in January 2014. Through these efforts, PYCE intends to contribute to a more stable and inclusive environment, that is both responsive to youth and re-imagined by their accomplishments.